

Informant: LMP-S1

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Interviewer: Claudia Hernandez

Interviewee: LMP-S1

Transcriber: Reyna Ronelli (5/22/02)

CH: Lets start with something we haven't really talked about-alcoholism. Can you talk about what you know regarding alcoholism? What causes alcoholism?

S1: Now?

CH: Yes.

S1: What is that you want to know?

CH: What causes alcoholism?

S1: Things like going to jail, death, losing a job, and problems at home can drive someone to alcoholism. Once a person starts to drink, the person can lose him/herself.

CH: But why does a person turn to alcohol?

S1: From disillusionment in life, like for example, not being able to find a job, or even just hanging around with the wrong crowd. Sometimes people can't find a job or have problems at home.

CH: The few times that we talked about alcoholism, you commented that sometimes it has to do with witchcraft (*brujeria*).

S1: Yes, but this is not always the case.

CH: Not all?

S1: No, not all alcoholics suffer from this condition due to witchcraft.

CH: Are there more people out there that suffer from alcoholism for reasons not having to do with witchcraft?

S1: Yes, lots of people. Witchcraft is more prominent in Central America. Here, people are usually just hooked on alcohol as a vice.

CH: What is the cause of that vice?

S1: Here, people are able to make money and so they have money to spend. Also, alcohol is sold everywhere. Here, you can go out and get alcohol in almost any store. You can find liquor everywhere. This is not the case in Guatemala. Not all people have money to spend on alcohol in Guatemala.

CH: Are you saying that in Guatemala people do not drink as much as they do here?

S1: Well, maybe during the weekend, but not everyday.

HC: Not everyday? So, here, people drink everyday?

S1: Well, in my neighborhood they do drink but of coarse not everybody does it. Women and children don't drink. Here, women and children drink.

HC: Have you seen children that drink?

S1: I've seen parents give their children alcohol.

HC: Children of what ages?

S1: Children between the ages of ten and fifteen.

HC: You don't think this is acceptable?

S1: In my view, drinking alcohol is not acceptable in any form, at least not for me. When people go to a party and they drink too much they end up turning into clowns. Once a person has had too much to drink they can't remember what happened at the party - they are not able to remember anything.

HC: Is drinking acceptable in Guatemalan culture? How do most Guatemalan people feel about alcoholism?

S2: They view it as a bad thing. Nobody is in favor of vices.

(Tape Off/Tape Resumes)

HC: We were talking about how people in Guatemala feel about alcoholism?

S2: Well, It's not acceptable. But they do sell clandestine wine that is cooked out in the ravines (*barrancos*). The people drink that cheap stuff and that stuff kills pretty quickly. It is made out of fermented [sounds like "*afreshu*"].

HC: What is [*afreshu*]?

S2: It is given to pigs as food.

HC: It comes from the pig?

S2: It's like the [???] of the wheat (*bagazo de trigo*).

HC: It's given to the pigs as food?

S2: Yes, that fattens them up.

HC: Clandestine liquor is made from this?

S2: Yes, it is very strong. It comes out crystal clear. It is buried for four to five days in some very old tunnels and it ferments there. It becomes foamy, it is boiled, and the (sumo) travels out of a tube into another tunnel. There it is collected in containers.

HC: So alcoholism is not as prominent in Guatemala as it is here?

S2: No, people in Guatemala do not drink everyday. Drinking takes place primarily during holy week (*semana santa*) and Christmas. Here people are always celebrating something. Everyday there is a celebration of some kind. I see that the Mexican people are always drinking on their front porch everyday.

HC: The Guatemalans that you know here, do they drink?

S2: I don't really know because I don't really go around visiting people. I don't like going to people's homes, but sure they drink. I've seen that they do drink. But I don't like visiting with people, not even my neighbors because I don't want any problems.

HC: What are the effects of alcohol? What happens to the body, the mind and the spirit?

S2: These people are always drugged up. After two beers, their mouth loosens up, and the person starts talking too much and will be more predisposed to fighting. People that are shy become bold and people that do not know how to dance get up and dance. Once a person has had six beers, they start seeing double.

HC: Do you know people that have had problems with alcohol, like for example Ray?

S2: He died about fourteen days ago.

HC: Really? You mentioned that last time?

S2: Yes.

HC: I wasn't sure.

S2: Well, it was he.

HC: He died of alcoholism?

S2: His liver was destroyed.

HC: Hadn't he stopped drinking?

S2: He stopped drinking but somebody offered him a drink. When somebody stops drinking for a year and then has a drink again, the person will hit the bottle twice as hard.

HC: That's too bad.

S2: He had been drinking for 35 years. He died with out a bit of compassion from anyone. He lived as a piece of debris out in the street. No one ever tried to help him. He was out there under the hot sun, rain, and everything-disregarded by people.

HC: Near his home?

S2: Here, at the corner. He experienced a lot of rejection from people.

HC: Oh, here on this corner?

S2: Yes.

HC: At least he is resting in peace now.

S2: The poor thing. Who is going to be able to rest in peace after being butchered up? No one can rest in peace that way. In this country, it is true that there are plenty of job opportunities but on the other hand – well I am not a doctor but I know many things, and let me tell you that if a dead person has no one to claim them here, the person is dismembered and used for research purposes. They will cut you into pieces. Who knows what really happens.

HC: So if a person is butchered and used for research purposes can that person's soul not rest in peace?

S1: How can you be in peace when you are treated like an animal? - Not at all. In Guatemala, they don't open up a dead person. A dead person is buried whole. Here, they turn you into a sponge. Here, they take people's body parts without the consent of their family. There was a guy who died, Ronaldito, who was really hard working. He never signed any paper that authorized the government to donate any of his body parts. They took his calves (*canillas*). I looked for his calves and they were gone.

HC: Oh, really?

S1: Yes, I tried to touch his calves. He was lying in the coffin but one side was higher than the other.

HC: It was not leveled?

S1: Yes, and when I touched him, I found they were gone. He didn't deserve to die all butchered. He also had a hole at the back of his head, I don't know for what reason. We picked up his body and had it delivered to Guatemala. Really the bodies that are sent from here over to Guatemala are for the most part an empty bag without organs. In facet, you can't even be sure it's your dead person. Here they seal the coffin with metal and you have no idea what really is in there. Nobody can see or feel the person. For all you know there is just a bunch of rubbish in there. They put the body in a sealed, copper-plated box but no one knows if the person is really in there or for that matter if the person has been butchered.

HC: That is a big concern, isn't it?

S1: Yes. There have been cases here in cemeteries, where bodies are removed from the burial site. I like visiting cemeteries. I feel at peace when I am in a cemetery. I know a lady who passed away about two years ago-she used to live in front of my house. She was a friend of mine. She didn't have calves and people knew this. There's not enough room for so many dead people. Look here, the lay out is like this: there's one here, one here, the other there, and like that. The space is very small. It's a fishy situation. I have a lady friend who wants to be buried here but I told her it's not a good idea. I volunteered to take her back to Guatemala to be buried. Here, they butcher bodies, burn them, throw them in the trash, or something like that.

HC: Your friend is from Guatemala?

S1: Yes. Haven't you heard of those cases where dead people are being taken out of their crypts only to be replaced by other dead corpses without the consent of their families?

HC: No, I haven't heard.

S1: They have talked about it on the news.

HC: I didn't hear about it.

S1: It has come out in the news.

HC: I'll have to pay attention.

S1: They are taking out some people's remains and replacing them with others without the family's consent. They remove the casket after six months or a year of being buried. They remove them because they know there is nothing in there.

HC: That's not cool. In Guatemala, did you treat people who had alcohol problems?

S1: Yes.

HC: Frequently?

S1: No, not often. I treat a lot people here.

HC: More men than women?

S1: The majority are men.

HC: What about in Guatemala?

S1: Not there. People have self-control.

HC: When someone has an alcohol problem, how can you help the person?

S1: I first recommend that the person not take any pills because they are not very good and may even be poisonous. What the person can do is take an avocado seed, rue root, the root of (**epazote**), and boiled garlic braids (**trenzas de ajo hervidas**). All of these things are bitter like gall (**hiel**). When the person is drunk you can mix all of these things with seven different kinds of strong liquor and give it to them as a drink.

HC: What kind of liquor?

S1: Any kind of white liquor that is not Whiskey. This mixture is warmed up and given to the drunk person to drink. This will make the person stop drinking.

HC: When you are preparing this remedy do you measure what you are putting in?

S1: No, I use like an eighth (**octavo**) of each thing.

HC: An eighth of each thing?

S1: An eighth is about this much or you can use half of an eighth.

HC: What about for the avocado seed?

S1: You just use one avocado seed and a roll of roots.

HC: What about (**epazote**)?

S1: You use the root or the leaf.

HC: I have heard that there are two kinds of ragweed (**epazote**).

S1: Skunk ragweed, (**epazote de zorillo**), common ragweed, is used for warm baths when people have a cold. The ragweed that you can eat (**epazote de comer**) is called, Good King Henry, and can be used in the way that I just explained.

HC: That is the one you use for this particular treatment?

S1: Yes.

HC: This is something that you have recommended in the past?

S1: Yes, this treatment cures people.

HC: For how long does a person need to drink this?

S1: About two times. When they drink this it makes the person vomit and expel everything from their stomach.

HC: The person vomits immediately after drinking the treatment or –

S1: The treatment is so potent that they even go in their pants.

HC: When a person takes this treatment does the person need to abstain from eating certain foods?

S1: No, not at all.

HC: A person can continue drinking and eating foods that they would normally?

S1: Yes, generally the person doesn't take the treatment frequently. There is a root in Guatemala known as the root of life (**raiz de la vida**) from the tree of life (**arbol de la vida**). You can find this in the rivers (**arroyos**). The bark of the tree is boiled and taken as a drink. It is a very healing drink. The water turns reddish.

HC: Can you find it here?

S1: No, not here. I used to import it but it costs too much. There is also a root known as (**tripa del diablo**).

HC: I think you mentioned that root before. Do you mix the "devil's tripe" (**tripa del diablo**) into the treatment?

S1: Yes, no, no (**tripa del diablo**) is something that is used separately.

HC: After a person starts the treatment, how long does it last?

S1: About ten or fifteen days. Every time the person has a drink, he/she will feel like throwing up because of the smell.

HC: That is the effect of the treatment?

S1: Yes.

HC: It causes the person to feel like throwing up?

S1: It induces vomit in a person.

HC: You said that you have treated more men than women?

S1: Yes.

HC: Is there some other treatment a person can take if the other treatment is not effective?

S1: I can use purple candles to get rid of that particular vice. I would pass some purple candles over the person.

HC: You would pass the candles over the person?

S1: Yes, nine purple candles to get rid of the vice.

HC: Do you usually teach the person how to make the treatment they need to take?

S1: No, I prepare it for the person and give it to them, otherwise the person would not take it.

HC: So the person needs to come to your place to get treated?

S1: Yes, because if I just give it to them to take with them, they will never take it and the treatment would not be very successfully.

HC: When a person has an alcohol problem does that person usually come looking for you on their?

S1: They usually come alone or maybe a family member brings the person in.

HC: Do more people come in by themselves or does some family member generally bring them in?

S1: The person with the alcohol problem generally does not come in on their own, usually the person is brought in by a family member.

HC: What kinds of personal problems do the people with alcohol problems typically have?

S1: Well, they might be jobless, they fight a lot at home, they steal from their families, and if they drive while under the influence they might even kill someone. Wherever they go, they carry the stench of alcohol and can't get a job.

HC: In Guatemalan culture, is it acceptable to drink socially?

S1: Generally, I think the people that are rich do not drink often. I mean they might have a drink but poor people usually drink a lot more like at community celebrations such as weddings.

HC: What is your observation here?

S1: Here, people have celebrations that can last up to a week. People drink so much that they end up at the hospital.

HC: How do you know whether a person's alcoholism is due to witchcraft or something else?

S1: A person that has been hexed drinks anything and everything. They drink cheap stuff, leftovers, or whatever. They get crazy and abusive.

HC: Do you treat people that have been victims of witchcraft the same way that you treat people that are just hooked on alcohol?

S1: No, I give them a different type of treatment.

HC: What kinds of treatments do you give them?

S1: I treat them with baths and cleansings.

HC: What kind of cleansings?

S1: I use rue, eggs, lemons, and I also talk to the person.

HC: What do you mean?

S1: I try and council the person and tell them that if they continue drinking they are going to die.

HC: Is that effective?

S1: Yes. I tell them that the treatment cannot kill anyone but that if they start drinking again they will surely die. This is effective because people are afraid of death.

HC: I remember you told me that Mr. Ray was a good friend of yours, that you had treated him for his alcohol problem, and that he had stopped drinking.

S1: He stopped drinking for two years, but he went to a bar one day, where someone offered him some “coronas” and he started up again.

HC: Was he your friend?

S1: He was like a friend. Whenever he was drunk he would come and stay here.

HC: He was not a family member?

S1: No. He was from Guatemala.

HC: What can a person do to ward off enemies? We talked about this last time.

S1: If a person wants to ward off their enemies and keep them away, a person can go to a cemetery and scrape a wooden or marble cross to get some dust. This is collected on a white piece of paper. Now, I’m not talking about the dirt but rather the powder scraped from the cross. Then, you take the dust from the cross of a dead person and place it in a small piece of paper and take it home. When you get home you put the powder into a glass of water like this one, you write the person’s name seven times and three pigeon feathers. You place this near your window or you can drop it near your front door and your enemies leave without you harming them. Now, if you want to cause them problems, you can take pieces of leftover candle, nine flowers and water from the flower vase from the wake. You put all these things together and the person’s picture into a jar. You petition the dead person to make your enemies go away or harm, or cause death to the person. I hardly ever do this because it’s very dangerous.

HC: If a person is gossiping and spreading bad rumors about you what can you do?

S1: You can light up two or three candles to Saint Ramon (**San Ramon**), you write the person's name on a piece of paper, you take San Simon oil, and small bits of hot pepper (**chile**), and you place these things over the fire to burn. You take the name of the person, a nickel, and place a piece of gum over the mouth of the saint. You can also use a piece of hot pepper (**chile**).

HC: What is this good for?

S1: So that the person stops making problems for you.

HC: Is this effective?

S1: One hundred percent effective.

HC: Who is Saint Ramon?

S1: A Guatemalan saint. Well, he's in Guatemala, but I don't know where he's from. You can find him in the Catholic Church.

HC: He helps with those kinds of problems?

S1: Yes. (Calls out to Edgar)

HC: If there is someone, like a family member who is very violent and you want to calm the person down, what can you do?
(Edgar enters the room and hands him a red San Ramon candle).

S1: This is **San Ramon Donato**. Here's the little mouth and the prayer.

HC: So in order to place the gum and all the other stuff on the Saint's mouth you need to use a big statue?

S1: No, you place it right on the mouth, over the image on the candle.

HC: Oh, you place it right there?

S1: Yes, that is how it is.

HC: So, how do you deal with violent people, without harming them?

S1: In Guatemala, I generally do a type of work that I can't do here because it requires you start a big fire and there are lots of rules here. I use black copal and three dolls, depending on the gender of whom I am treating. You use copal and make a fence (**cerco**) with it. You take a picture of the person and place it face up along with the name of the person. You have to cut off the head of the person with scissors. It is like taking the person's spirit. You use lots of sulphur (**asufre**), lots of covanero pepper (sounds like:

chile covanero), a small Guatemalan pepper, and you light up a black candle with copal. When the flame is getting high you cut off the flame with a machete so that you cut the person's spirit.

HC: The flame?

S1: The person then starts to speak to you nicely and becomes civilized.

HC: Because if the person is not acting normally it is like the person was not civilized.

S1: A person that does not respect others is like an animal. This has to be done every three years because it does not last.

HC: Every three years you have to do the treatment again?

S1: In the case that someone is too hyper or disrespecting you, you can take nine lemons and stuff them with basil (**albahaca**) and rue (**ruda**) leaves cut in the shape of the cross. You cut the lemons in the shape of a cross, and you place the photo of the person inside and put it in the refrigerator. This cuts off the person's spirit (**animo**).

HC: What if you don't have a refrigerator?

S1: Well, then you don't do it because it isn't going to work (laughs).

HC: We also talked about love problems, money problems, but what other kinds of problems come up?

S1: I get women with hemorrhaging problems. Women that go to doctors because they have a heavy menstrual flow and doctors have not been able to do anything for them. I've been known to treat women in three days. I've seen women that have to use two or three sanitary napkins to try and hold their menstruation flow. Sometimes hemorrhaging can be caused due to tumors, or scrapes that a woman suffers during an abortion, or after a stillbirth, I don't know. Doctors can't do anything for these women. They give these women injections that hold the blood for one or two days but then the hemorrhaging starts all over again. These women come in to see me and they are really pale, like paper. If you know anyone with this problem bring her to me. I wish I had a video camera so that I could record some of these cases for you.

HC: You should call us.

S1: You wouldn't come; I don't think you'd come.

HC: Why not?

S1: I mean this happens so fast. People come in suddenly. Like this morning, a woman came in that was really sick.

HC: What did she have?

S1: Fungus (**hongos**). There is this illness plaguing the Latin people, I don't know if it is due to some sort of food. This is an illness that generally plagues white folks. It isn't common in Latin people; they seem to be developing fungus on their skin.

HC: Fungus?

S1: Nobody can cure it. A lot of the white folks suffer from this; they are like sores (**llagas**) like the ones President Clinton had, do you remember?

HC: Yes.

S1: They are like cancerous. They sprout like fish scales (**escama de pescado**) and are very hard to treat. Do you know how I get rid of the swelling? Guess what I use.

HC: What do you use?

S1: Hydrogen peroxide (**agua oxigenada**), (**metaf**), and iodine (**yodo**).

HC: What is (**metaf**)?

S1: (**Metaf**) is a liquid that is used to dry wounds. It is used in Guatemala, and the Hydrogen Peroxide, you can find that here. I mix them both and have the person rub it vigorously all over their body.

HC: Oh, really? In Guatemala – can you find (**metaf**) cream here? Can you find that here?

S1: No.

HC: So you have to import it from Guatemala?

S1: Yes. There was this Russian, millionaire man from Cucamonga. You should have seen, he was in horrible shape. He was about 25 years of age; he drove a Rolls Royce, had been to all kinds of Dermatologist and couldn't get rid of his problem. He came to me and I cured him.

HC: How were you able to cure him?

S1: I used the treatment I just told you about.

HC: You used (**metaf**), iodine (**yodo**), and hydrogen peroxide?

S1: Yes.

HC: Do you yourself put the treatment on the infected area, or does the person treat him/herself?

S1: I treat the area or I give it to them. I treated his back, his chest, and arms. You should have seen his legs. He had sores all over his legs and they went away.

HC: How long did it take?

S1: About two months. There was this young woman who would wear her hair all over her face. She would not go out into the street. She looked like a scaly fish. That is how her face was. It was eating away at her face.

HC: Why?

S1: Have you seen [sounds like: *piña de marrano*]?

HC: [*Piña de marrano*]?

S1: Well, this poor young woman had her face like that. It was cracking like that. I don't know what kind of food is causing this. These people suffer from itchiness (*picazones*). It's horrible.

HC: You think it has to do with some food?

S1: It has to do with some food – something that the person is eating that is bad and poisons the person.

HC: I saw on the news that some children were having skin problems. They were itchy and red.

S1: Yes, that is due to allergies having to do with foods. We don't have that kind of stuff in Guatemala. In Guatemala when someone gets allergies it is because they are careless. But not here, in this country everything has [???].

HC: What are the problems that you most frequently deal with?

S1: Severe headaches, stress, and people that start to lose their mind. For example, people that start to go blank when they are thinking just like when you erase a tape. I deal with people that have lots of problems at home, and women that suffer from abdominal and vaginal pain. I do not examine them or touch them but I do give them some medicine.

HC: What do you give them?

S1: I give them something to drink.

HC: Do you prepare it?

S1: Yes, it's a simple preparation.

HC: What do you put in the drink?

S1: It's like anise water with other things.

HC: Ok, so these are the problems you most frequently treat?

S1: This past year I saw a lot women suffering from hemorrhages, due to heavy menstruation.

HC: Do you treat a lot of skin problems?

S1: A lot of skin problems.

HC: Ok, Carlos, I think this is it since you have clients waiting.

S1: Well, I really do not have anyone waiting for me yet but I think this it for now.

HC: Ok, thank you.

*****END OF TAPE*****